



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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February 13, 2013

Dr. Freeman Williams
Superintendent
Christina School District
600 N. Lombard Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

To Dr. Williams & the Christina School District Board:

As part of Delaware's Race to the Top (RTTT) plan, the state and participating districts agreed to pursue a set of strategies to "ensure the equitable distribution of effective educators." As a component of the RTTT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), each Delaware school district was required to create a plan and execute against this objective ("Objective 5").

On pages 80-85 of Christina School District's (CSD) state-approved RTTT plan, CSD committed \$243,642 to "develop incentives for teachers to work in high-needs schools" and proposed an educator engagement process to be completed by summer 2012 to address this activity. Notably, CSD also pledged to "align resources as well as the plan for implementation with the State sponsored incentive assistance program scheduled for implementation in 2012."

As of the date of this letter, CSD has delivered on neither pledge and has now also declined a state-sponsored opportunity (see below) that would ensure that the district could deliver on both. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has documented to CSD leadership in multiple district monitoring routines over the past year that the negligible progress made by CSD in Objective 5 represented a major area of concern. DDOE specifically referenced commitments in CSD's plan each time. This letter outlines the history of and the consequences related to CSD's decision not to fulfill the commitments it made within Objective 5.

On December 14, 2012, DDOE's Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU) invited CSD to participate in the statewide "Delaware Talent Cooperative." CSD declined the invitation on January 28, 2013, stating that "at this time Christina will not be able to participate in the school-wide program" while acknowledging that "several of these activities are not on-track schedule-wise for implementation but we wish to continue or redefine incentive programs for identified schools."

In June of 2012, CSD declined a similar opportunity to participate in the first iteration of the state-sponsored program, which has since been refined based upon educator and stakeholder feedback. DDOE honored that decision given the timeframe of the invitation.

With the current invitation to participate in the Delaware Talent Cooperative, every educator in ten of Christina's highest-need schools is eligible to participate (www.detalentcoop.org), and each school is also eligible for a \$10,000 school-based grant as part of successful participation. By declining the state's invitation to participate for a second year in a row, CSD will remain out of compliance by not participating in an initiative that is a central component of the state's RTTT plan and a featured component of the district's plan.

With respect to CSD's non-compliance to its commitments, the DDOE requests that CSD provide a written response to DDOE within fifteen days that does one of the following:

- a) Accepts DDOE's invitation to participate in the Delaware Talent Cooperative; or
- b) Outlines a detailed request to amend Objective 5 of its plan. This amendment would be subject to DDOE approval and must meet the conditions outlined in the "Subgrantee Race to the Top Monitoring Plan"

Should the district fail to meet the aforementioned conditions associated with being removed from non-compliant status, DDOE will initiate the process of withholding the entirety of district RTTT funding in Year 4 of the grant (\$2,396,850). These potential consequences come after many months of intensive collaboration and partnership with CSD on the implementation of several statewide initiatives, including the Delaware Talent Cooperative.

As identified in your notification of grant award (NOTOG) from DDOE/USED and as outlined in DDOE's LEA Implementation Support Guide, annual funding decisions are based on the LEA's progress and performance over the course of the previous grant year. RTTT funds may therefore be suspended or withheld at any time if an LEA is found to be out of compliance with applicable requirements (see NOTOG(s) and Yr. 3 Memorandum from DDOE sent on 6/29/2012).

DDOE requests a written response from CSD no later than February 28, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher N. Ruszkowski
Chief Officer, Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Unit
Delaware Department of Education